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vestigator through the only barrier that stopped her progress, and it is certainly a great triumph to geographical research that what is called the "*North-West Passage*" should have been discovered by Commander R. M'Clure and his gallant companions.

GEO. BACK.

NOTE.—Captain M'Clure and his crew left the *Investigator* on the 3rd June, 1853, and repaired on board the *Resolute*, Captain Kellett, which ship failed in getting farther than about twenty-five miles S.E. of Byam Martin Island, where she wintered; and was ultimately deserted in April, 1854, by the order of Sir Edward Belcher. Captain M'Clure finally reached England in the *Phoenix* steamer, Captain Inglefield, in September, 1854.

X. — *Report of a Canoe Expedition along the East Coast of Vancouver Island.* By JAMES DOUGLAS, Esq., Governor.

Communicated by the COLONIAL OFFICE. With Note on Queen Charlotte Islands.

Read February 28, 1853.

SIR,

Fort Victoria, Aug. 27, 1852.

SINCE I had last the honour of addressing you on the 22nd instant, I have carried out the project, which I have long entertained, of a canoe expedition through the Canal de Arro, and along the E. coast of Vancouver Island, for the purpose of examining the country, and of communicating with the native tribes who inhabit that part of the colony; and I will now concisely state the result of my observations in the course of that journey.

2. In our passage through the Canal de Arro we were struck with the extreme incorrectness of the maps of Vancouver Island. The line of coast is well delineated, and could be traced upon our maps as far as the promontory named Cowichin Head; but from that point all resemblance to the coast ceases: the multitude of islands forming the Arro Archipelago, which extend as far as, and terminate at, Cala Descanso, being laid down as an integral portion of Vancouver Island; whereas the true line of coast runs from 15 to 20 miles W. of its position as laid down on our maps; the intermediate space being occupied by islands, and channels of various breadths, generally navigable, but probably inconvenient for sailing vessels on account of the strong currents and frequent calms which occur in these narrow waters. A correct survey of these channels will remove the difficulties that would at present be experienced by sailing vessels navigating those straits; and should Her Majesty's Government at any time direct surveys to be made in this quarter, I think the Arro Archipelago will be found to have peculiar claims to their attention, as there is a prospect of its soon becoming the channel of a very important trade.

3. On our route through the Canal de Arro we touched at the Cowichin river, which falls into that canal about 20 miles N. of Cowichin Head, and derives its name from the tribe of Indians which inhabits the neighbouring country. They live in several villages, each having a distinct chief, or headman, who cannot be said to rule the community which acknowledges his supremacy, as there is no code of laws, nor do the chiefs possess the power or means of maintaining a regular government; but their personal influence is nevertheless very great with their followers. The Cowichins are a warlike people, mustering about 500 fighting-men, among a population of about 2100 souls.

They were extremely friendly and hospitable to our party, and gave us much information of the interior, which, by their report, appears to be well watered and abounding in extensive tracts of arable land.

The Cowichin rises in a lake, within a few hours' journey of the salt-water arm of Nitinat (Barclay Sound), on the W. coast of Vancouver Island, and is navigable for canoes to its source. These Indians partially cultivate the alluvial islands near the mouth of the river, where we saw many large and well-kept fields of potatoes in a very flourishing state, and a number of fine cucumbers, which had been raised in the open air without any particular care.

4. About 10 miles N. of the Cowichin the Chemanis river enters the Canal de Arro. It is altogether a smaller stream than the former, and is navigable but a short distance from the coast. It is inhabited by a branch of the Cowichin tribe, whom we did not see.

5. As we proceeded N. from the Cowichin a complete change was observed in the physical character of the country, the primitive and transition rocks of the Victoria District being replaced by the sandstone formations; in some places falling with a gentle slope, in others presenting precipitous cliffs towards the sea.

6. The promontory of Cala Descanso is the northern point of the Arro Archipelago; beyond which is the Inlet of Wentuhuysen, to which point my attention was particularly attracted through a report of *coal* having been seen by the Indians in that vicinity. These people are called Nanainio, and speak nearly the same language, but have not the reputation of being either so numerous or warlike as the Cowichin tribe.

We entered into immediate communication, and found them very friendly, and disposed to give every information we desired in regard to all matters concerning their own affairs and the country which they inhabit.

They live chiefly by fishing, and also grow large quantities of potatoes in fields which they have brought into cultivation earn

their villages. These are built chiefly on a river named Nanaimo, which falls into the inlet, and is navigable for canoes to the distance of 40 miles from the sea-coast. Food is cheap and abundant, and we were plentifully supplied with fresh salmon and excellent potatoes during our stay there.

7. The reports concerning the existence of *coal* in that place were, I rejoice to say, not unfounded : as the Indians pointed out *three beds* cropping out in different parts of the inlet ; and they also reported that *several other* beds occurred on the coast and in the interior of the country, which we did not see. One of those beds measured $57\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth, of clean coal ; and it was impossible to repress a feeling of exultation in beholding so huge a mass of mineral wealth, so singularly brought to light by the hand of nature, as if for the purpose of inviting human enterprise, at a time when coal is a great desideratum in the Pacific ;* and the discovery can hardly fail to be of signal advantage to the colony. The two other seams which we examined were about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile distant from the former, and measured respectively 3 inches and 20 inches in depth, and are valuable chiefly as indicating the direction of the beds.

There is every reason to believe, from the appearance of the country and its geological phenomena, that Vancouver Island, about Wentuhyusen Inlet, is *one vast coal-field* : and, if that conjecture be correct, the progress of the colony will be rapid and prosperous, notwithstanding the many adverse circumstances which have hitherto retarded the development of its resources.

8. That consideration induces me to offer a few remarks on the navigation of the coast between Victoria and Wentuhyusen Inlet. The shortest and most direct route between those points is through the Canal de Arro, a part of the coast of which little is known, and, judging from the maps in my possession, has never been correctly surveyed. Merchant vessels are therefore deterred from taking that route, and follow the circuitous channel explored by Vancouver in the year 1795, which greatly prolongs the voyage, making the difference of nearly a week, in point of time, on a short run of 140 miles.

It is therefore of the very greatest importance to the trade of this colony that the Canal de Arro should be explored and a correct survey prepared as soon as possible, showing the soundings, shoals, and anchorages where ships may bring-to in calms, or during the continuance of adverse winds ; and I beg most earnestly to recommend that measure to your consideration, especially as Her Majesty's Government would thereby render an essential service not only to this colony, but to the general interests of trade and navigation.

* Coal has been quoted at San Francisco at seventeen dollars per ton.—E.D.

9. Our excursion did not extend beyond the Inlet of Wentu-huysen, from whence we commenced our return to Victoria, after distributing small presents to the chiefs of the various tribes, with which they appeared highly satisfied.

10. In the course of that journey we observed traces of iron-stone on several parts of the coast; and we also procured a rich specimen of copper ore, found in a distant part of Vancouver Island, which will be hereafter examined.

The Hudson Bay Company's schooner 'Cadborough' lately visited the coal district in Wentu-huysen Inlet, and succeeded in procuring, with the assistance of Indians, about 50 tons of coal *in one day*. The harbour is safe and accessible to vessels of any class, and the coal is within two cables' length of the anchorage; so that every circumstance connected with this valuable discovery is suggestive of success.

11. The Hudson Bay Company have also sent a small body of miners to examine the coal beds, and to commence immediate operations there.

12. Her Majesty's ship 'Thetis' arrived at Esquimaux on the 22nd instant, direct from Queen Charlotte Islands; and, I believe, Captain Kuper has orders from the Commander-in-chief to remain on the coast till the month of January next, chiefly with the view of guarding the ports of Queen Charlotte Islands. The gold diggings in that quarter have not been productive this season, which has not, however, altered the general opinion entertained as to its wealth in the precious metals—the adventurers ascribing their late want of success simply to the circumstance of the true beds not having been discovered.

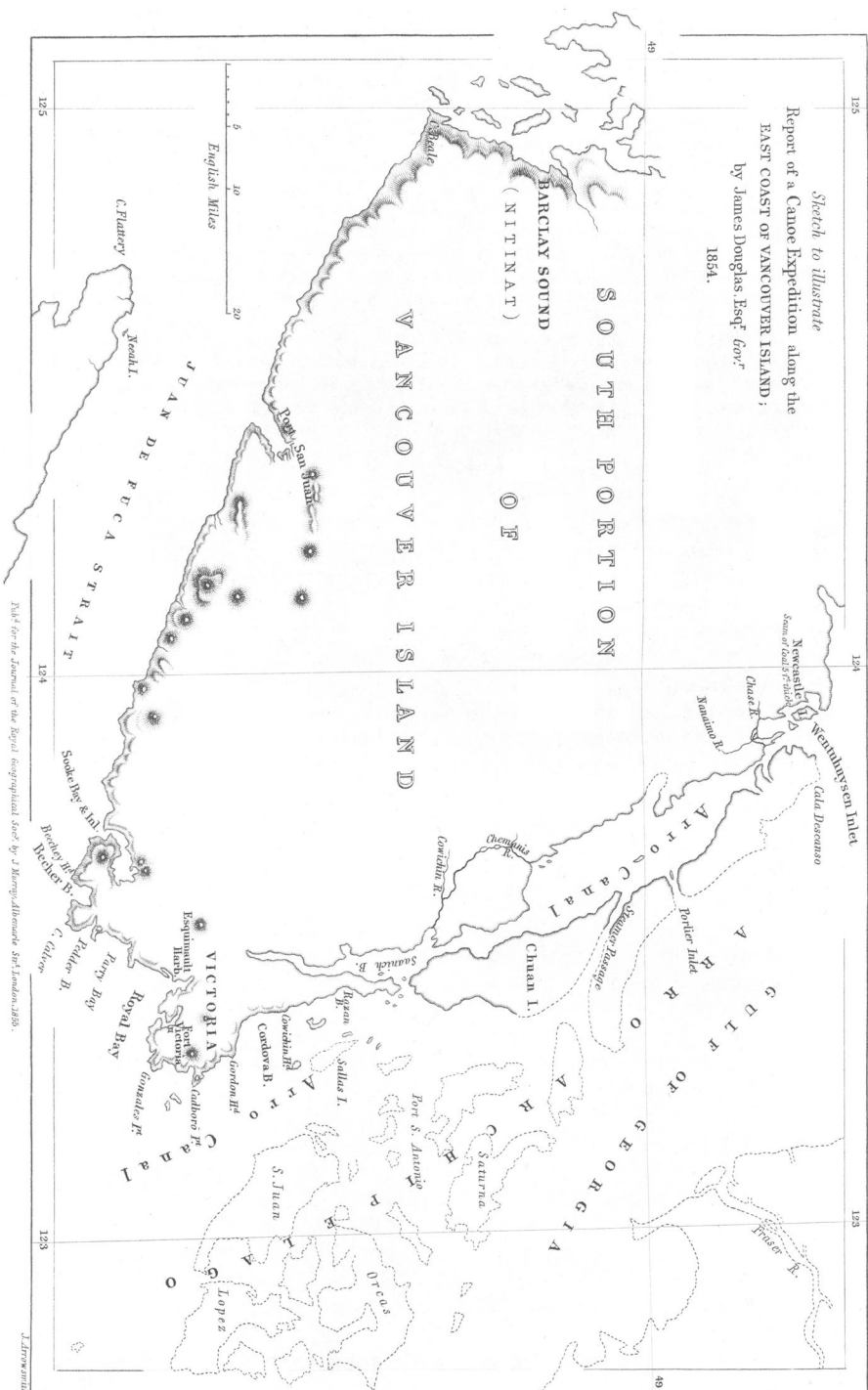
Fine specimens of lead and copper ore have also been procured on Queen Charlotte Islands, which, in a commercial view, gives it an additional value.

NOTE.—The discovery of gold in this part of Her Britannic Majesty's dominions was made by Captain Rooney, who commanded the schooner 'Susan Sturge,' * belonging to Messrs. Gray and Easterby, merchants at San Francisco, and by whom he was instructed to go up to Queen Charlotte Islands, and explore and see what business could be done with those islands that would be advantageous to the trade of San Francisco; and in the early part of the year 1852 he sailed for these northern islands, and on arrival made several discoveries—one of which was that, instead of there being (as is laid down on the charts) one large island, a group of *three* islands were found. He also discovered and named Victoria Island, Elliott Isles, Wansey Isle, and laid down the various places named in the sketch annexed. Having entertained friendly intercourse with the natives, whom he found anxious to trade with him, he returned to San Francisco in the latter part of May, and, beside bringing a variety of matters and things relating to the commerce that might be opened

* This schooner has since been taken and plundered by the natives of these very islands on the 26th of September, 1852.—ED.

Sketch to illustrate
Report of a Canoe Expedition along the
EAST COAST OF VANCOUVER ISLAND;

by James Douglas Esq. Gov.
 1854.



with these islands, he had on board two sons of native chiefs, who came with him as a guarantee of good faith to parties wishing to trade with them. A specimen of the gold-bearing quartz from Una Point, Mitchell Harbour, in the middle island of the Queen Charlotte Islands, was also brought, which, from an assay made in London, yielded 6317 dwts. 4 grs. of gold to the ton of quartz. Small pieces of gold, varying in size from a grain of wheat to a pigeon's egg, fall out of the rock after blasting. Traces of silver have also been found in the rock.—ED.

XI.—Official Report of the Proceedings of the Exploring Party under Commander J. C. PREVOST, of H.M.S. Virago, sent to cross the Isthmus of Darien.

Communicated through SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON.

Read April 24, 1854.

December 16th, 1853.—(Full Moon.) 8.0 P.M. Weighed and steamed from the anchorage of Taboga, near Panama, shaping a course to pass inside the Pearl Islands. 11. Sighted Pacheca, the northernmost of the Pearl Islands. Daylight, off the Farallon Ingles.

Saturday, 17th.—8 A.M. Entered the Gulf of San Miguel, steering mid-channel between Points Brava and Garachiné to avoid the Buey Shoal, which extends some distance S. of the former. The tide or current was strong against us; general soundings from 6 to 8 fathoms, which deepened as we approached Punta Patino. Passed through the Boca-Chica Passage at low-water spring-tides; lowest east 7 fathoms. Entered the harbour of Darien, a magnificent sheet of water, and at 2.30 P.M. anchored in the mouth of the Savana River.

Sunday, 18th.—8.15 A.M. Discovered the ship dragging her anchor, let go small bower and got steam up; brought up outside the river in Darien Harbour with 48 fathoms on each anchor. 10.30. Low water. Weighed and proceeded up the river. In picking up a berth, the ship grounded on a soft mud-bank off the right side of the river Savana; laid out kedge, let go small bower, and waited for the tide to flow. 3 P.M. Ship floated, steamed to an anchorage in mid-channel, and moored with swivel, 36 fathoms on each anchor. We were shortly afterwards visited by the authorities from Chapigana, a village situated about 8 miles distant on the S. bank of the Tuyra, containing about 150 inhabitants. These persons, viz. the Gefé Politico and Governor of the province, Don Manuel Borbina, the Alcalde, and Messrs. Hossack and Nelson, Scotchmen, gave us every information in their power of the route we were about to take, and obtained for us all the native assistance we required.

Monday, 19th.—About noon a party in the cutter and gig, with a canoe for the Indians, left the ship fully armed and equipped, with 14 days' provisions.

The latitude and longitude of two principal points being given, viz., Fuerte del Principe, lat. $8^{\circ} 34' N.$, * long. $77^{\circ} 56' W.$, and Port Escoces, lat. $8^{\circ} 50' N.$, long. $77^{\circ} 41' W.$, I deemed it better to work out our route as a course and distance, and cut our road accordingly, rather than trust to the uncertainty of the published maps, which appear to differ materially from each other. The survey made by Mr. W. Haydon, acting

* The positions of these places are, according to Mr. Gisborne's recent survey (as laid down in his MS. map), also adopted in an Admiralty Chart, just published, Fuerte del Principe, lat. $8^{\circ} 44' N.$, long. $78^{\circ} 8' W.$, and Port Escoces, lat. $8^{\circ} 51' N.$, long. $77^{\circ} 36\frac{1}{2}' W.$ —ED.